



American Citizen Services News

Now is the time for traveler enrollment!

The Department of State encourages U.S. citizens living overseas or planning to travel abroad to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Events over the last months have reminded many American citizens of the importance of being in touch with the Embassy. Enrollment (formerly known as "travel registration") is the way the U.S. government reaches out to American citizens overseas to provide updates, guidance and assistance in case of emergencies. We send enrollees information about the security situation in Syria as well as in neighboring countries.

Within the past year, the number of Americans who have enrolled with the Embassy has more than doubled to nearly 9,000. We encourage all American citizens living in Syria to enroll and, if enrolled already, to log in and update information, including landline phones, mobile phones, and e-mail ad-



resses.

How do I enroll?

Point your web browser to: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>.

You can create an account by clicking on the "Create an Account" link and following the instructions provided. When you create an account, you will be able to select a username and password so that you can access your travel data at any time. The personal information section will include basic information about yourself, and also for an emergency contact that is not traveling with you.

Once you have created an account, you will be able to view your profile and add trips or overseas residences to register with a specific U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Click on the "Add Trip" button or "Add Overseas Residence" buttons to add this information. Follow through the pages, and complete as much information as you have available. There are very few required fields, but thorough information enables the U.S. Embassy to help you more quickly and efficiently. You will receive a confirmation e-mail to ensure that you are registered correctly.

How does the Embassy help enrollees?

By enrolling in STEP, we can keep you up to date with safety and security announcements. Remember to keep all your information in STEP up to date; it is particularly important to include a current phone number and e-mail address. Enrolling also makes it easier for us to contact you in the event of an emergency. Concerned family can call the State Department's Overseas Citizens Services at 1-888-407-4747; the State Department will relay the message to consular officers in the country in which you are traveling. Consular officers will attempt to locate you, pass on messages, and, consistent with the Privacy Act, report back to your family.

If you are caught up in a natural disaster or civil disturbance, let your relatives know as soon as possible that you are safe, or contact a U.S. consul who will pass that message to your family through the State Department..

Information about services the Embassy provides can be found at : <http://damascus.usembassy.gov/service.html>

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Consular Information Program

In addition to helping the Embassy contact Americans during an emergency, enrollment enables the Embassy to send information and notifications to you about current events, changes in procedures, and other issues that affect American citizens overseas. Following is an overview of some of the information we send out to enrollees:

Country Specific Information

We provide [Country Specific Information](#) for every country of the world. For each country, you will find information like the location of the U.S. embassy and any consular offices; whether you need a visa; crime and security information; health and medical conditions; drug penalties; and localized hot spots.

Travel Alerts

We issue [Travel Alerts](#) for short-term events we think you should know about when planning travel to a country. Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions that pose significant risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events

such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert.

Travel Warnings

We issue a [Travel Warning](#) when we want you to consider very carefully whether you should go to a country at all. Travel Warnings are issued when long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable lead the State Department to recommend that Americans avoid or consider the risk of travel to that country. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff.

Newsletters

We send out newsletters, like this one, to keep in regular contact with the American community and provide information that Americans abroad may find of use. In [past newsletters](#) we have included articles about changes in passport procedures, preparing for study in the U.S., U.S. cultural events taking place in Syria, etc. Staying in touch, even when there isn't an emergency, helps us provide better assistance during a crisis.

Visit the Consular Section on Facebook!



Our Facebook page is growing fast, with new “likes” and “friends” every day. We appreciate the warm reception we’ve received so far and would encourage American citizens and their friends interested in travel to the United States to visit the page often.

While we use the [Embassy’s web site](#) and warden messages as the primary medium to provide new information, the Facebook page is a great way to interact and ask any specific questions you may have.

The Facebook page can be accessed at:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Damascus-Syria/Consular-Section-U.S.-Embassy-Damascus/108958265838252>.

By clicking the “like” button at the top of the page, you will automatically receive news updates and have the ability to post comments or questions.

Planning for Emergencies

In addition to enrolling with the Consular section through STEP as described earlier, you should also review the State Department's [Country Specific Information for Syria](#) as well as the current [World-wide Caution](#), and State Department brochures, such as [A Safe Trip Abroad](#), [Tips for Traveling Abroad](#) and [Residing Abroad](#). You may also wish to keep a copy of the Embassy phone number close to you at all times. This number is (011) 3391-4444. Press "0" during the short recorded message in order to speak to a person who will put you through to the appropriate section of the Embassy.

Some key points are:

1) Have a Plan

Your family may not be together during an emergency, so it is important to plan in advance: how you will contact one another; how you will get back together; and what you will do in different situations. In the event of an emergency or unrest, you should consider some basic precautions:

-- In the event of protests or unrest, stay at home. Make sure you have basic supplies for a few days.

--Keep your phone charged. You may wish to buy an extra card now and keep it at home for emergencies.

Additional information, written about planning for emergencies in the U.S., but applicable elsewhere, can be found on the [Ready.Gov](#) website.

2) Stay Safe

- If you sense danger, do not go toward it.
- Do not attend demonstrations.
- Don't take pictures of demonstrations.

3) Keep informed.

- Read the papers and magazines.
- Follow the news on TV and on shortwave radio, too. Often, during a crisis, communications, including the Internet, will be disrupted.

Emergency preparedness: home supply kit

In an emergency, local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it might take days. In addition, basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment, and telephones may be cut off for days, or even a week or longer.

Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger

Profile: Damascus women's group

Since March 8 is International Women's Day, we thought it would be appropriate to focus on the non-profit group, the American Women of Damascus (AWD). For more than 35 years, AWD has been a mainstay of the American citizen community in the capital. Although the organization does not have branches in other Syrian cities, as the sole American women's group in the country it plays an important role as social and cultural hub for women in the citizen community.

In its mission statement, the AWD says its purpose is for members to meet in fellowship, exchange ideas and interests, and participate and provide funds for social and cultural activities. The organization helps American women to become more deeply acquainted with the customs and culture of Syria, and also raises funds for Syrian and international charitable and cultural organizations.

Full membership is open to any woman resident of the Damascus area who is a U.S. citizen, whether by birth or naturalization, or whose husband is a U.S. citizen. AWD also has an "associate" membership category, which is open to all English-speaking women with U.S. ties, such education, employment, or family. The great majority of members are full members.

The group meets the second Monday of every month at one of the members' homes.

AWD works hard to maintain its American identity and to help American families stay connected to their American roots while living in Syria. The group helps organize American holiday celebrations and other activities for members and their families such as Halloween trick-or-treating at members' homes, Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas celebrations, Mother's Day and a Spring picnic with Easter egg hunt for the kids.



Excerpts from President Obama's Proclamation on International Women's Day:

During Women's History Month, we reflect on the extraordinary accomplishments of women and honor their role in shaping the course of our Nation's history. Today, women have reached heights their mothers and grandmothers might only have imagined. Women now comprise nearly half of our workforce and the majority of students in our colleges and universities. They scale the skies as astronauts, expand our economy as entrepreneurs and business leaders, and serve our country at the highest levels of government and our Armed Forces. In honor of the pioneering women who came before us, and in recognition of those who will come after us, this month, we recommit to erasing the remaining inequities facing women in our day.

This year, we commemorate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day, a global celebration of the economic, political, and social achievements of women past, present, and future. My Administration has elevated the rights of women and girls abroad as a critical aspect of our foreign and national security policy. Empowering women across the globe is not simply the right thing to do, it is also smart foreign policy. Today, we are integrating a focus on women and girls in all our diplomatic efforts, and incorporating gender considerations in every aspect of our development assistance. We are working to build the participation of women into all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution, and we are continuing to lead in combating the scourge of conflict related sexual violence, both bilaterally and at the United Nations.

In America, we must lead by example in protecting women's rights and supporting their empowerment. Despite our progress, too many women continue to be paid less than male workers, and women are significantly underrepresented in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. By tapping into the potential and talents of all our citizens, we can utilize an enormous source of economic growth and prosperity.

As we reflect on the triumphs of the past, we must also look to the limitless potential that lies ahead. As we prepare to write the next chapter of women's history, let us resolve to build on the progress won by the trailblazers of the past. We must carry forward the work of the women who came before us and ensure our daughters have no limits on their dreams.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2011 as Women's History Month.

American Language Center Test Dates

Test	March 2011	April 2011	May 2011	June 2011
ITP	Wednesday, March 9 Thursday, March 24	Wednesday, April 6 Monday, April 18 Thursday, April 28	Wednesday, May 4 Monday, May 23	Wednesday, June 8 Thursday, June 30
GRE	N/A	Subject Test Saturday, April 9	N/A	N/A
SAT	N/A	N/A	Saturday, May 7	Saturday, June 4
TOEFL	Friday, March 4	N/A	Saturday, May 7	N/A
TSE	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered
TOEIC	Wednesday, March 23	Wednesday, April 27	Tuesday, May 24	Wednesday, June 29

Make sure family and friends understand visa lottery

The Embassy frequently receives inquiries from people regarding diversity visas for immigration to the United States. While the diversity visa program is very real, and many Syrians benefit from it, fraudulent web sites often seek to take advantage of people's hope to immigrate to the U.S.

The Department of State, Office of Visa Services, advises the public of a notable increase in fraudulent e-mails and letters sent to Diversity Immigrant Visa (DV) program (Visa Lottery) applicants.

Fraudulent websites are posing as official U.S. government sites. Some companies posing as the U.S. government have sought money in order to "complete" DV entry forms. If your friends or relatives are interested in the diversity visa lottery, please let them know that there is no charge to download and complete the Electronic Diversity Visa Entry Form. To learn more, see the [Department of State Warning](#) and the [Federal Trade Commission Warning](#).

The Department of State does NOT notify successful DV applicants by e-mail. Entrants who completed online DV-2011 entries between October 2, 2009, and November 30, 2009, and who were selected in the random drawing were notified by the Department of State, Kentucky Consular Center, by letter.

Entrants can also check the status of their entries by returning to the website at <http://www.dvlottery.state.gov> from July 1, 2010, until June 30, 2011.

Entrants who completed online DV-2012 entries will not receive notification letters from the Kentucky Consular Center, and must check the status of their entries by returning to the website at <http://www.dvlottery.state.gov> on or after May 1, 2011, through June 30, 2012.



American Citizen Services Hours and Contact Information

For appointments, please go to our website at :
<http://damascus.usembassy.gov/service.html>

UPCOMING HOLIDAY CLOSURES

March 21, Monday

Mother's Day

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"Assisting approximately 4 million Americans who reside overseas and nearly 60 million who travel abroad remains a top priority for the U.S. government.

Though consular work is punctuated by extraordinary acts to help U.S. citizens during times of crisis or urgent need, it is built upon a foundation of services provided to an American public that increasingly lives, works, and learns in the global community."

-- Department of State and USAID Strategic Plan.